



**SMOKING
CESSATION**
FOR CANCER PATIENTS

MARCH 2017

Quotes from Cancer Patients Who Quit Smoking

[RAW DATA FILE](#)

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PATIENT 1

- Female, 53 years old, lives in Nunavut, former heavy smoker, quit 3 years before breast cancer diagnosis
- Quit smoking pre-diagnosis + breast cancer survivor

PATIENT 2

- Male, 65 years old, lives in Alberta, heavy smoker, diagnosed with multiple myeloma 1 year ago, quit smoking 5 months after diagnosis
- Quit smoking during multiple myeloma treatment + multiple myeloma survivor

*this was a family interview with the patient's daughter translating and sometimes answering questions herself

PATIENT 3

- Male, 66 years old, lives in Nova Scotia, smoked for 45 years quite heavily, diagnosed with lung cancer in 1995, quit smoking in 2008
- Quit smoking post-diagnosis during treatment + terminal lung cancer patient

ROLE OF SMOKING IN PATIENT'S LIFE:

- “I would smoke as soon as I got up, and on my way to work, and it was, you know, it was a stress reliever but I didn't know what it was doing to me.” (Patient 1)
- “Around 50 years ago he started smoking. And he never stopped. Almost 50 years he smoked. He smoked a lot more than 1 pack, sometimes maybe 2. So smoking was a big thing in his life.” (Patient 2)
- “I don't think anyone really understood the issues surrounding cigarette smoking. Doctors smoked, celebrities smoked, Ed Sullivan smoked on TV, so it was common to smoke everywhere.” (Patient 3)
- “It was extremely difficult to quit and the addiction, the cigarette addiction to nicotine is so strong. It's a drug and your brain is altered by this drug and it got to a point where nicotine controlled your life.” (Patient 3)
- “...my mother passed away in 1969 at 49 years old from lung cancer. Now I never associated her death with lung cancer, even when I was diagnosed with lung cancer myself in 1995, I still had this mental wall that was 10 feet high and 3 feet thick that smoking didn't cause cancer”. (Patient 3)
- “I try to encourage my nieces and nephews to quit smoking, or cut down at least. They asked me how I did it, and it was what my grandson said to me that stuck in, I didn't want to lose his kisses. That's how I quit.” (Patient 1)
- “After maybe 5 months [of cancer treatment] he stopped smoking because he was having trouble breathing and he had to stay in the hospital for 2 nights because of that. Other than that, he said I am not smoking anymore and he was successful.” (Patient 2)
- “[A friend] asked how I was doing and I told her about the diabetes and she asked me if I quit smoking yet, and I said not I haven't. She said ‘come here,’ and she went into her office and I followed her. She spoke with her secretary in her office and the secretary went over the closet and pulled out this oxygen unit with a mask on it. Mary looked at me and said ‘this is what you are going to face if you don't quit smoking.’ That was a powerful thing right there, [my friends] helped me with their caring and non condemnation.” (Patient 3)

REASONS FOR QUITTING:

- “When my grandson was 4, my sisters and I went outside for a cigarette. When we came back from smoking, my grandson wanted to give me a kiss, so I knelt down to give him a kiss and he almost puked. I said what's wrong, and he said, ‘Nana you are so stinky, you should quit smoking.’” (Patient 1)
- “One of the reasons I think that I probably didn't quit smoking was that the type of cancer I had was not caused by cigarettes according to the thoracic surgeon that did this work for me” (Patient 3)
- “[The surgeon] was a teaching doctor and he had a bunch of young people following him around all the time. Behind the curtain I heard one of the

BARRIERS TO QUITTING / REASONS FOR CONTINUED SMOKING:

young people say, 'well this gentlemen's cancer is not caused by cigarette smoking,' and the doctor just said 'shhh we don't want him to know that.' Too late, I already knew that just from hearing that conversation. So that to me was a license to smoke because it didn't cause my type of cancer." (Patient 3)

- "Even with the cancer diagnosis in 1995 I arrogantly ignored it, it was just something that my body would get rid of and medical science would cure and I would be ok. It turns out it was different." (Patient 3)
- "I thought this myself, well why should I quit smoking, I am 50 years old now, I have had lung cancer, its going to kill me anyway, why should I quit smoking today when I am going to walk across the road tomorrow and get hit by a truck? You make all these justifications in your brain about why you don't need to quit smoking." (Patient 3)
- "[At a stop smoking clinic] they threw a whole bunch of documentation at us that anyone with 2 or 3 PhDs could understand. But the average person couldn't understand what was on half of these pages. So passing that kind of information to a layman is a waste of time." (Patient 3)

SMOKING RELAPSES:

- "Sometimes, you have the urge to want to go outside and light a cigarette, but you just go outside and get a wiff, smell it and then come back and say 'I can do it.' Once in a while you crave that, but my grandson always comes back in my mind." (Patient 1)
- "I would make it sometimes 2 or 3 days, sometimes 2 or 3 hours, sometimes 2 or 3 weeks, but I would always go back to it, that dragon on my back was just digging his claws into me. I just had to have the cigarette and once I had that cigarette in my mouth I was fine." (Patient 3)
- "One of the things that I finally decided to do was

never quit quitting. I never stopped trying to quit. I don't know, I can say it was dozens of times or hundred of times that I tried to quit. To reach that point of no return, and the point of no return is when you put down the cigarette and you never inhale another bit of cigarette smoke into your body, and to get to that point is an uphill battle." (Patient 3)

- "I think there is a lot of failure in quitting smoking. Very seldom, I think you could probably count in one hand the number of people in Canada who have quit smoking the first time they tried. More often than not, it was 10, 16, 30 times they tried before they finally quit." (Patient 3)

CESSATION STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS:

- "I buy that polar ice gum that is hot. It keeps me from getting a cigarette in my mouth." (Patient 1)
- "He just went cold turkey." (Patient 2)
- "It is also about mentality. Its about the mood. If your mood is up, this is better than the medicine because of the power of you brain. He said that there is a space in your life for smoking. When the smoking goes, there is no empty space in the life, and other things fill that emptiness. He said that quitting gum and the patch doesn't help you, anytime you can go back to smoking. Just cold turkey. You have to believe, believing is the big power." (Patient 2)
- "I discovered a drug called Champix I believe it is and that's what did it for me." (Patient 3)
- "The company I worked for, [Champix] was covered under my medical plan. So that was great, it didn't cost me any money. Now some of the other previous stop smoking aids I tried like gum and the patch, all of that stuff actually costs more than it costs to smoke. A smoker is going to look at it, well it costs me \$20 a day to smoke, and its going to cost me \$40 per day to quit, I am going to keep smoking

simply because it costs less to keep smoking than it does to quit.” (Patient 3)

- “Once they asked me if I was a smoker, I told them no, I quit on my own thanks to my grandson. They gave me some pamphlets that could help. I tried to make my family quit too so I gave them the pamphlets...” (Patient 1)
- “Cover the cost of quitting smoking. If its going to cost \$2000 - \$4000 to cover the cost of getting a 25 year old to quit smoking, that investment is going to save you millions down the road. So if you can get a 20 year old to stop smoking today, then by the time they are 60, 65 years old they are going to be pretty darn physically and mentally fit compared to somebody like myself with a litany of cigarette induced illnesses.” (Patient 3)

EXPERIENCES WITH HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ADVICE ON QUITTING SMOKING POST-DIAGNOSIS:

- “The doctors said that you are going into hard days, it is stressful and all the treatments, and they said if he stopped smoking it would give him more stress. They told him, if you smoke less, even better, but they didn’t push him.” (Patient 2)
- *Question – Did your doctors help with quitting smoking after your diagnosis?* “None whatsoever at that point in time. I think in 1995 not even the medical community understood the ramifications of lung cancer and smoking cigarettes.” (Patient 3)
- “There is no sense in telling me that smoking is bad for me, I know that already. And to constantly harp on the fact that this what you should be doing is not going to really affect an awful lot of people. So that’s sort of a little bit of a barrier on some healthcare professionals, on some not all” (Patient 3)

PERCEIVED LINKS WITH SMOKING AND CANCER:

- “[With] multiple myeloma, they cannot say it is because of smoking, so there is no research that can say 100% that because he smoked he got this cancer. We don’t know yet, maybe yes, maybe not. He just stopped [smoking].” (Patient 2)
- “One of the reasons I think that I probably didn’t quit smoking was that the type of cancer I had was not caused by cigarettes according to the thoracic surgeon that did this work for me. So that to me was a license to smoke because it didn’t cause my type of cancer.” (Patient 3)
- “We talk to our kids and our grandchildren about smoking, and what cigarettes can do to you, like causing cancer and stuff.” (Patient 1)

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF QUITTING OR CONTINUED SMOKING ON CANCER JOURNEY:

- *Question – Do you think the fact that you quit smoking helped with your cancer journey?* “Yes it did. All the risks ... I didn’t have cancer back and stuff like that.” (Patient 1)
- *Question – Do you think that your continued smoking had an impact on your cancer journey?* “I know that for a fact. My second diagnosis was around 2009. I was again diagnosed with lung cancer, same lung, upper lobe this time instead of lower lobe. At that time I was advised that it was terminal. Unfortunately, and I do say unfortunately, cigarettes have already done the damage to my body with the diabetes, COPD, the chronic heart disease and probably a couple of other things, like sleep apnea. So I think everything, every single thing that is currently going on with my 66 year old body has somehow been [related to] cigarettes. Yes, smoking after [the diagnosis] did cause me some serious damage.” (Patient 3)

STIGMA

- “...but if you are going to be judgemental to a smoker, then you are going to be judgemental to a heroin addict or an alcoholic. A lot of the attitudes towards smoking needs to definitely change, or realign a little bit to understand that people who have smoked their second cigarette aren't doing it by choice, they are doing it because they are bloody well addicted to nicotine” (Patient 3)

SUPPORTING OTHERS IN THEIR QUIT JOURNEY:

- “[Quitting smoking] really helped me out and I always encourage my sisters or my friend to try and cut down, and don't go outside [to smoke] as much.” (Patient 1)
- “I always tell people, you know you don't need to smoke so much. You can have one in the afternoon, try you know, instead of having one in the morning, try having one at 10am and then at 2pm you know. Try to break it down to less cigarettes.” (Patient 1)
- “If anything I say can help one 20 year old to stop smoking its all been worth it.” (Patient 3)

MESSAGES TO HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS:

- “[The surgeon] was a teaching doctor and he had a bunch of young people following him around all the time. Behind the curtain I heard one of the young people say, ‘well this gentlemen's cancer is not caused by cigarette smoking,’ and the doctor just said ‘shhh we don't want him to know that.’ Too late, I already knew that just from hearing that conversation. So that to me was a license to smoke because it didn't cause my type of cancer. So the thing I tried to impart to health care professionals in the past year that I have been doing the kind of work that we are doing today, is be careful what you say and when you say it” (Patient 3)
- “The major issue with healthcare is to tell the smoker

that the help is there, all they need to do is ask for it.” (Patient 3)

- “There is going to be a relapse a week from now, and the relapse is going to last for years, weeks, days or even hours before its over with, but if I am a healthcare professional I want to look at people non-judgementally. I don't wan to be judgemental towards.. you probably never smoked a single cigarette in your whole life, and when you talk to a smoker don't talk to them like they are beneath you. You are a doctor, nurse, etc. and you realized at a young age that cigarette smoking was bad so you never did smoke, and you look at a smoker like they are somebody you don't want to associate with, they are stupid because they keep on smoking, well basically don't be judgemental.” (Patient 3)
- “I have gone to a seminar with about 30 healthcare people there. I basically told them my story, from 1963 to date.... They were quite impressed and thought that some of the messages I was giving were powerful.” (Patient 3)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- “What we received in hospital, but everywhere, me and my father, we couldn't believe, he said are we in heaven? It was like that. We are feeling like we are at a five star hotel.... They were all angels without wings. Just thanks a million times. Everyday I am proud to be Canadian, to be here.” (Patient 2)
- “Once I had that diagnosis I was forced to face reality and take off the rose colored glasses and look at life the way it was. That has probably changed me a lot in my outlook on life. Right now I sort of feel like I want to live forever, and so far I am winning, I am still here. I hear people saying how they battle cancer, I don't know how you battle cancer but one thing I do know is that one large part of that battle is your mental abilities and mental outlook.” (Patient 3)

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